



EFFECTIVE DATE: 8-22-2017

DATE ISSUED: 8-22-2017

LATEST REVISION: 8-22-2017

SUBJECT: State-Led Task Force on Children in Emergencies.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Order is to formally establish a State-Led Children's Task Force to coordinate efforts of state, local and community provider organizations to meet the needs of children, youth, and families impacted by natural disasters and public health emergencies.

II. BACKGROUND

Children and Youth are uniquely vulnerable to the adverse effects of natural disasters and public health emergencies. When time is of the essence and needs are urgent, as is often the case during and in the wake of a disaster, the diffusion of supportive services across a broad spectrum of service providers, public agencies, schools, charitable groups, public health authorities and other groups can create unnecessary barriers to service provision.

In the wake of Superstorm Sandy, New Jersey had considerable success in mitigating these difficulties by the informal establishment of a State-Led Task Force to ensure seamless coordination of efforts.

III. POLICY

- A) Upon the onset of a disaster or public health emergency, and in the discretion of the Commissioner of Children and Families, the Commissioner shall convene the State-Led Task Force on Children in Emergencies (hereafter "Task Force"). It shall be the mission and purpose of this Task Force:
 - a. To provide a forum for the sharing of information and coordination of efforts between state, local and community organizations on the provision of services to children, youth, and families in anticipation of, during, or in the aftermath of natural disasters or public health emergencies.
 - b. To serve as a clearinghouse for and central repository on information related to a disaster's impact on statewide resources, including but not limited to child care and services provided under the auspices of the Department of Children and Families.

- c. As necessary, to provide guidance, coordination and assistance in the resolution of problems related to service delivery to specific children, youth, or families during disasters or public health emergencies.
 - d. As requested, to provide input on the development of plans to ensure the ready provision of services to children, youth, and families during a disaster.
 - e. As necessary, to serve as a central point for the collection, allocation and distribution of privately donated goods and services for the direct benefit of children, youth, and families served.
- B) The Task Force shall be convened and meet at the request of the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families when and as he or she determines necessary.
- C) Membership on the Task Force shall be determined by the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families, and subject to modification at his or her discretion. Membership shall include, at a minimum, the Assistant Commissioner for Child Protection and Permanency, the Assistant Commissioner for the Children's System of Care and the Assistant Commissioner for the Division on Women/Family Community Partnerships or designees. The Commissioner shall consider inclusion of non-governmental and private sector membership which may include members of the task force convened in the wake of Superstorm Sandy: Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care; Traumatic Loss Coalition; Montclair State University Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health; American Red Cross; Save the Children; Children's Health Fund; American Academy of Pediatrics; Zero to Three; Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies; and faith-based organizations. Additionally, representatives from sister state agencies may include the New Jersey Departments of Human Services, Health, Education and Community Affairs.
- D) On any individual client matter brought before the Task Force by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency, the Task Force shall be considered a multi-disciplinary team as the term is used in N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10a, and permitted to receive investigative information necessary to enable decision making processes. Task Force members shall be subject to confidentiality provisions of that statute as implemented by N.J.A.C. 3A:3.
- E) The Task Force is not empowered to expend state funds, to enter into contracts or agreements, nor otherwise make commitments on behalf of the state, the Department of Children and Families or any Task Force member.
- F) The Department of Children and Families shall provide necessary support to the Task Force to fulfill its responsibilities under this order, including the provision of meeting space, information technology support and staffing as determined appropriate by the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families.

- G) The Chief of Staff is directed to take steps to achieve the establishment of the Task Force and fulfillment of the objectives outlined herein.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison Blake". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allison Blake, Ph.D., L.S.W.
Commissioner